



Mi'kmaq Nation

## 2022 Organizational Assessment

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## About Work Smart Consulting

Dr. Cynthia Howard has worked with thousands of leaders and over a hundred companies providing Executive Coaching and Performance Consultation.

15 years' experience in Critical Care as a Registered Nurse, Director, setting up Shared Governance.

25 years Executive Coach, setting up leadership pipeline, leadership training.

PhD | Psychology (1998)

LSSBB | Lean Six Sigma Black Belt

Numerous certifications in Lean, the use of assessments, performance improvement

Author, 3 books

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## WHAT DOES PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVE MEAN?

Lean Six Sigma is a data-driven approach to improvement that values prevention. Satisfaction and bottom-line results are achieved by reducing **VARIATION**, waste, and time it takes to do a job, while promoting standard practices and workflow that serves the employee and the process.

## VARIATION AT MI'KMAQ NATION

People find their own way to get work done.

Reports should be standardized.

Especially the grant reports.

There are no measures or performance standards.

Things get done when people do them and there are times when nothing is done.

## Mission

**Tribal Council:** The Tribal Council of the Mi'kmaq Nation is devoted to the by-laws and policies of the Mi'kmaq Nation. The Council will continue to enhance the lifestyle of all tribal members in health, education and employment. All tribal business will be carried out with impeccability and dignity.

**Mi'kmaq Nation:** The Mi'kmaq Nation is a community whose mission is to provide the Mi'kmaq people a nurturing environment where all community members live a healthy and prosperous life while at the same time maintaining the Mi'kmaq language, culture, and traditions that the Mi'kmaq community longs for.

### ICare Mission Statement

**Integrity** – I shall think and act with honesty and in the best interest of our community, co-workers and the tribe.

**Collaboration** – I shall work with the people we serve, each other (co-workers) and external customers to offer the highest quality service.

**Accountability** – I shall maintain the highest standards and follow through on our grants/ awards and goals.

**Respect** – I shall treat our community, co-workers with courtesy, kindness while maintaining their dignity and respecting their individual opinions.

**Excellence** – I shall try to constantly improve our knowledge and skills in the pursuit of quality of services to our co-workers, the community, and Tribe.

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## Executive Summary

The Mi'kmaq Nation is indeed a special and industrious group of people dedicated to living in a tribal community, preserving their heritage as a legacy for those to come behind them. There are many strengths and incredible accomplishments that are not addressed in this report because this is about the gaps. *See full report and the SWOT.*

It is a special honor to have this opportunity to evaluate performance within the leadership and workplace. While parts of this message may seem prickly to some, it is given in the spirit of love, knowing that the best way forward is through whatever challenge presents itself.

This summary provides the “bottom line” assessment while the entire report offers details and solutions. I highly recommend reading through it all as I have provided some teaching along the way.

### **Background:**

Organizational Assessment requested by TC because of another complaint of unfair practice. Directors and TC are to be evaluated for their favoritism and performance.

### **Process:**

All directors and TC members contacted via email for an appointment. The same questions were asked of all. Content of the interviews are confidential. Themes and patterns were identified.

- 40 hours of interviews
- 3 months of Council minutes read and processed for themes
- 3 months of Director reports
- Code of Ethics
- By laws
- Strategic Plan

50% of all interviews were either late or no show.

### **Online Engagement Survey: 59 respondents**

3.5/5 Stars Overall satisfaction working for the tribe

12% felt “Everyone is treated fair.” This means 88% do not.

The most frequent answer was “Neither Agree nor Disagree” indicating people are afraid to share their opinion.

## **FINDINGS:**

### **1.) Inconsistent use of policy**

### **2.) Communication breakdown in Council meetings**

### **3.) Lack of focus in Council meetings**

The personnel policies are not followed regarding the handling of employee grievances leading to complaints of favoritism.

I could not see where Council focused on Strategic Plan with meetings. Lacked clear agenda. Minutes do not have follow through or accountability.

What comes up repeatedly is a focus on pay raises even after pay ranges are granted, yet no one can say why this is happening.

95% of Directors are hardworking and committed to their departments. There is a need for additional training in organization, reporting and basic leadership skills.



Disrespect for people and policy is happening at all levels of the organization. There is an epidemic of gossip, some quite malicious, fed on rumors, yet accepted as truth. Policy is ignored, by everyone, and people are treated differently based on tribal membership and family membership. Staff are demoralized, but because this is their tribe, they can't quit. Some do not try as hard and believe that "special favors" are the way to get ahead rather than through their own effort. Others have become cynical. The morale is low, and people are working in fear they will lose their jobs because of the council's history of firing people.

The gossip blurs the "truth" about leaders' efforts and motives which interferes with their ability to be effective in their role. Complaints are judgmental and lack substance related to actual performance. When council, or anyone, steps outside of policy and provides an audience for a community member without referring them to proper channels, it demeans your system of governance.

Words used by 95% of the directors to describe the experience with Council are:

- Toxic
- Humiliating
- Condescending
- Unprepared
- Micromanaging

Contrast this with words used on Vision/ Mission/ Goals:

- Dignity
- Respect
- Nurturing
- Excellence
- Follow through

Many of council members did not understand need for an assessment and were not aware of why it was being done.

The current frustration around the lack of progress in Council meetings seems to be due to lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities. It would be meaningful to have clarity around what tribal oversight means what it looks like in a practical sense. There is tremendous experience within the council yet, the forum does not lend itself to a healthy debate.

## Online Survey Findings

**3.5 stars**

Overall Satisfaction Working with the Tribe

59/99 Respondents

12% agree “Everyone is treated fairly.” 88% do not.

96% agree workplace performance should be based on work and not family relationships.

5x in the last month, on average, staff witnessed someone getting special treatment.

98% felt Tribal Council should focus on the following issues:

Helping tribe gain independence

Stopping the flow and use of drugs.

Helping people stay in school

Helping tribal members start businesses and gain economic security

*And not micromanage the day-to-day operations of tribal business*

44% feel appreciated for the job they do. This means 56% do not.

29% feel there is a process for reviewing new ideas. (*When new ideas are not considered, there is a lack of trust and motivation. People do not feel valued.*)

62% feel comfortable talking to TA (*When malicious gossip is allowed to flourish, leaders are faced with unrealistic demands. And when the workplace does not have true performance standards, leaders face an uphill battle when trying to increase productivity. Any request is seen as unfair. See recommendations.*)

The most frequent answer was “Neither Agree nor Disagree” indicating people are afraid to share their opinion. *Healthy cultures that welcome open dialogue build trust and have greater productivity.*

### **Individual Comments**

Favoritism is rampant within the Administration.

Native employees are not treated as well as non-Native employees.

I love the office culture. I love my colleagues. I only struggle with confusing policies ...

## SWOT

### STRENGTHS

- Commitment to a legacy for the tribe
- People have a servant's heart and want to live in a tribal community with a sense of belonging where people can flourish and feel safe and accepted
- Hard working
- Natural talents and instincts for growth

### WEAKNESSES

- Lack of clarity around the responsibility of Council and its roles in oversight
- Family dominance holding everyone else hostage to their rules
- Lack of numbers to vote in new amendments and progressive changes to by laws.
- Lack of focus on education, leadership development, operational practices

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Redefine roles and responsibilities for Council members to have more ownership in the outcomes of tribal life
- This clarity unlocks the amazing talent within the Council to explore new and lucrative opportunities for financial growth and security
- To become a model for Tribal life and leadership

### THREATS

- Continued stalls in growth
- Risk losing the gains made, people leave, or new people do not come in
- Fighting and bickering over minute details losing sight of the big picture and the larger issues
- Changes in global governments including US



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Each recommendation is explained further and follows this summary.

1.) Change Council Minutes to include follow up. See parking lot minutes.

2.) Have Council members take on specific responsibilities as it relates to tribal life. See Roles and Responsibilities.

3.) Focus Council on 4 projects per year, one to be accomplished every quarter, determined at the start of every year.

4.) Hold a Vision Quest every December to set the agenda for the coming year. Present to the Tribal Community in January and have updates every quarter in a celebration with food, speeches, and updates on progress. Review the year in December prior to the Vision Quest.

5.) Set up self-governing committee to handle the grievances and complaints as well as the new ideas. This empowers staff and helps every learn how to problem-solve.

6.) Refine the Performance Standards and establish Performance indicators (KPI's) for each department building on the PMAP and emphasis on performance over personality.

7.) Make respect a standard. See Respect policy. Have everyone, staff, leaders, and council read and sign.

## PARKING LOT MINUTES

POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT	Items under discussion	
	Opportunities?	Plan
	Later	Do Not Consider
LOW	Implementation	
	EASY DIFFICULT	

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL

Increases ownership and accountability in the TC by having each member focus on important issues within the tribal community. Ascribe each council member's role to serve as an advocate for an aspect of Tribal Community Life

- Independence of Tribe (sovereignty, etc.)
- Flow and Use of Drugs (community safety)
- Education
- Economic Security/ Entrepreneurship
- Cultural Empowerment (family/ soul/ spiritual life of tribal members)

To support this effort, suggest TC members attend community functions and engage with the community. Rediscover what it means to be part of a Tribe and what Tribal Leadership means.

Partner with the community at large, network with influencers in the community at large to bring in needed resources to community.

See RACIF and Project Overview Micro-charter, excel spreadsheets.

## 4 PROJECTS PER YEAR/ VISION QUEST

1.) Focus the year based on an agenda established every December. Go off site if possible and spend 2 days coming together on the issues in the community and using Strategic Plan to focus. Plan the event to include presentations by each council member on their respective responsibilities.

2.) Set up the quarterly projects for the year. Establish the growth plans including the desired financials.

*Without a vision, people perish...* [Proverbs 29:18] *Make it plain so people can run with it...* [Habakkuk 2:2]

Establish a quarterly focus for the Council based on projects that will enhance the Strategic Plan.

Use the Simple Charter to identify desired outcomes, roles, and responsibilities.

3.) Present results and plans to community.

Celebrate these with the Tribal Community every Quarter with tribal food, customs of Mi'kmaq. Do a Year End Review every December, invite community, include a celebration, even if the projects are not fully accomplished, come together and present what was done and what is planned next.

## WORKPLACE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Purpose:** To facilitate new ideas and process complaints using a standardized process.

**Committee:** 5 members, including Chair (no more, too big and it becomes useless)

Chairperson, 6-month term, renewable for 1 term. Must rotate after 1 year.

Receive \$1200 bonus at end of year based on consistency and performance.

Hold and run 2-hour meetings monthly.

Members, 4-month term, can renew 2 terms and then rotate out.

Receive a free lunch per month.

Include this in the Quarterly events held by Council mentioned in previous suggestion. Have the WGC present their efforts and successes with TC, Tribal leaders, directors, and staff attending, as Chair and committee review policies implements, suggestions, etc.

**KPI:** # suggestions/ month, # projects/ completed, implemented, backlogged.

**Performance Tip:** This committee would be a core aspect of a quality improvement plan for the tribal operations.

## REFINE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Review the key indicators in each department that reflect how well the department is doing. This becomes the PMAP measure.

KPI's are those benchmark metrics specific to the department that act as performance indicators of how well the department is doing.

Having these measures will refine the reports provided to council providing the needed information for their oversight function.

This keeps the report, to the council, 1 page long and easy to read so everyone can be prepared at the TC meetings.

## **Appendix**

## RESPECT POLICY

**Purpose:** Promote the expected behavior that best captures the heart of the Mi'kmaq tribal customs.

### **Policy Statement:**

Mi'kmaq Nation is committed to creating a workplace where everyone can thrive, do their best work, in an environment of mutual respect. It is customary for the Mi'kmaq people to honor each other and oppose any acts of gossip, discrimination, violence, harassment, and/or assault by anyone, whether employee, client, visitor, or otherwise.

This policy will provide the clarity and guidance for employees, leaders and anyone who interacts with the Tribe. For those who feel their personal rights may have been violated, this policy offers the roadmap to handle the next steps.

For those who witness acts of discrimination, violence, harassment, and/or assault, this policy offers definitions of various behaviors so you can intervene. For those accused of any misconduct, this policy delineates your path.

### **Policy Scope:**

Every employee is responsible to uphold this policy and to do their part to keep our workplace healthy, safe, and respectful.

This policy applies to all activities that occur within and outside of the workplace and apply equally regardless of what position one holds and or what family. This policy applies not only to employees but to employee interactions with clients, visitors, or vendors.

### **Definitions:**

Gossip – talking about people, spreading rumors that make that person look bad.

Bullying – hostility toward another that is deliberate, repeated and sufficient to cause harm to the targeted person's health, safety, or economic status.

Harassment – behavior toward another coworker that is unwelcome or offensive. This includes unwanted sexual advances.

Workplace – space where work takes place, both on site and digital.



All staff, leaders and TC members need to sign and date this policy as a condition of their activity in the tribal workplace.